

VIRGINIA STATEWIDE HUMAN SERVICES I&R SYSTEM

Database Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

The following criteria of the Virginia Statewide Information and Referral System (I&R) follows as closely as possible the standard practices set forth by Alliance of Information & Referral Systems, Inc. (AIRS).

Inclusions

The agency/service provider must provide a human service. Human services are defined as:

The activities of human services professionals which help people become more self-sufficient, sustain independence, strengthen family relationships, support personal and social development and ensure the well-being of individuals, families, groups and communities. Specific human services include ensuring that people have access to adequate food, shelter, clothing and transportation; financial resources to meet their needs; consumer education and decision support; criminal justice or legal services; education and employment; health and mental health care, including substance abuse services; and environmental protection, both routinely and in times of disaster or other emergencies. Human services also facilitate the capabilities of people to care for children or other dependents; ensure that protective services are available to those who are vulnerable; provide for the support of older adults and people with disabilities; offer social, faith-based, and leisure time activities; provide for the cultural enrichment of the community; and ensure that people have the information they need to fully participate in community life.

The agency/service provider must serve the residents of the I&R region. The agency/service provider must have been in existence more than six months in order to indicate a degree of permanence, unless the case is either of the following:

- The agency/service provider is an affiliate of an established service provider with multiple locations or
- The agency/service provider is the result of a community or coalition planning process.

The agency/service provider may be either government or non-profit. For-profit organizations and unincorporated groups meeting critical human service needs shall also be included.

NOTE: From the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS) as adapted from the definition of "Social Work" in the Dictionary of Social Work published by the National Association of Social Workers.

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- In adding agencies/service providers to the database, priority shall be given to scarce, free or low-cost resources.

Services consistently and systematically tracked by another organization that gives referrals to the public may be included or excluded at the option of the regional I&R center (i.e. mental health practitioners in areas with a comprehensive mental health referral service). The other referring agency shall be included in the regional I&R database, whether or not the direct service providers are listed.

Examples of Inclusions

- Other local agencies providing I&R, including specialized I&R
- Essential services (food, shelter, etc.)
- Government agencies (local, state, and federal)
- Agencies located in bordering states if they serve the residents of the I&R region
- Advocacy organizations
- Self-help support groups. The contact person may move, change their telephone number, or simply drop out of the organization. Therefore, each regional I&R center shall have the option to track state, regional or national headquarters, instead of local groups
- State and national parks located in your I&R region, only

Exclusions

- Organizations which discriminate based on race, religion or similar factors
- Organizations engaged in fraudulent or illegal activities
- Agencies which misrepresent their services in any way, including non-delivery of listed services
- Individual practitioners (i.e. physicians or psychiatrists in a private practice)
- Organizations and/or professionals which are not licensed (in areas where licensing standards exist)
- Political and issue-oriented groups (unless the alternate viewpoint is also represented, such as pro-choice and pro-life; pro-gun and anti-gun control groups)
- Faith community-based programs that provide services only to members of their own congregations
- Organizations that only provide funding for programs offered by direct service providers: include the organizations that offer those services
- National organizations with local chapters that directly administer services the local chapter should be listed; their affiliation with the national organization may be noted in their description; however, if the national organization also delivers services to the public, list it also.

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- Organizations that exist solely to serve the clients of another service provider (for example, if a counseling service only serves clients of DSS's Child Protective Services program under a contract, do not include the counseling service in the database. Instead, indicate in the DSS Child Protective Services program description that counseling can be provided to Child Protective Services clients by the separate counseling service).

Review

All centers shall have a Review Committee in place to evaluate program entries submitted for inclusion into their database. The committee will be composed of no less than three members, at least two of whom shall be members of the regional I&R staff (i.e., I&R Specialist, I&R Program Coordinator, or the I&R Manager) or staff of partner agencies. The committee can meet on demand to evaluate a program's mission statement and its conformity to these I&R guidelines.

Denial

If a program is found ineligible for listing in a regional database, that center will inform the service provider of their decision. Notification should be in writing, with a brief statement of the reason for ineligibility, within 30 days from the service provider's submission of program information.

Appeal

Each center shall have an appeal process in place. Service providers must request an appeal hearing in writing no later than 30 days from the date of denial. A representative of the excluded agency will be allowed to meet with an I&R program representative to present the service provider's case.

To eliminate misunderstandings where right of inclusion is concerned, each center should add a notice on each survey or update form stating that the I&R may exclude or remove an agency for any reason - ***inclusion is a privilege, not a right.***

Complaints regarding a service provider

Before an I&R center will act on a complaint regarding a service provider, the complaint shall be submitted to the I&R center in writing. Complaints may come from the complainant or from a staff member taking the information from the complainant. The written complaint shall be dated, with a detailed description of the complaint and signed by the complainant. Complainants may be either inquirers or human service professionals, including members of the staff of an I&R center.

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Once a formal complaint has been made, the Review Committee shall review the complaint within seven days. Within three days of completion of the review, the subject service provider shall be notified in writing of the complaint, along with the recommended action.

If the Review Committee decides that the service provider shall be removed from the database, notification shall include the agency's right of appeal.

Confidentiality

To protect the confidentiality of the complainant, neither the Review Committee nor the I&R center shall reveal the name of the complainant protesting the inclusion of a particular organization in the database.

Concurrent Reviews

The complainant may also be referred to other agencies with investigative authority to file a complaint. Depending on the nature of the complaint, these might include licensing, law enforcement, or funding sources.

Review of Criteria

The Database User's Group of the Statewide I&R System shall review these criteria every three years.